

CONTRIBUTION TO NIE-9: TURKEY

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PROBLEM - To estimate Turkey's position in the East-West conflict and the implications thereof.

I. TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION

A. Turkey's policy toward the USSR and its Satellites and toward the Western powers. Turkey's deep-seated fear and distrust of Russia's expansionist aims may be traced back to the period of Peter the Great, when the rising Russian state began to contest Ottoman hegemony in the Black Sea area. In the succeeding centuries the two powers were frequently in conflict and sometimes at war. Possessing superior strength, Russia continued to advance but was at times halted by Western support of the declining Ottoman Empire. The revolutionary regimes which succeeded the old orders in the two countries were temporarily aligned in the early 1920's, sharing a common desire to resist Western interference and a common disavowal of imperialist policies of the past. Later in the decade, however, relations began to cool as the Kremlin saw a nationalist, non-Communist regime develop in Turkey and as the Turks, consistently suspicious of Russian expansionism, improved their relations with Western European powers. Turkey's alignment with the West became clearer at the Montreux conference of 1936, where the Turks gained the right to refortify the straits.

The Soviet-German pact of August 1939 engendered the worst fears in Turkish minds as to Russia's purpose. The Turkish Government then attempted to elicit from Moscow some declaration of assurance but was rebuffed. In October the UK and France signed with Turkey a

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mutual assistance pact which, although specifically excluding any Turkish obligation to take action inimical to the USSR, produced strenuous objections by Moscow. During most of World War II, Turkey pursued a formal policy of neutrality, inclining slightly in favor of whatever force ⁱⁿ Turkey's vicinity was stronger at the time. As the Allies gained ascendancy in Europe, Turkey broke with the Axis in 1944 and in February 1945 declared war on Germany and Japan, thus gaining admission to the UN as a charter member.

The USSR's post-war intention to dominate peripheral areas was demonstrated in March 1945 when Moscow denounced the Russo-Turkish treaty of friendship of 1925 and rejected Turkish offers to continue or replace it. In the following years, the Soviet Union has consistently applied official and unofficial pressure on Turkey. In 1946 the USSR demanded revision of the Montreux convention to place control of the straits in the hand of the Black Sea powers. Ankara refused to deal unilaterally with the USSR and was supported by the Western powers. Soviet propagandists have enunciated claims to territory in eastern Turkey, and have denounced the Turkish regime, vilified Turkish leaders, attacked Turkey's close association with the US, and attempted to incite revolt against the Turkish Government. In addition, Bulgaria has assumed a threatening posture on Turkey's European frontier and recently announced its intention to expel to Turkey 250,000 Moslems.

The Turks have stood firm against Soviet and Satellite pressure. On the one hand they have refused to be provoked into hasty or ill-advised action, have avoided unnecessary provocation of the USSR, and have indicated a willingness to discuss issues with

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the USSR under appropriate circumstances. On the other hand, they have made it clear that they are strongly adverse to a policy of appeasement and are determined to resist any Soviet attempts to encroach on their national independence and territorial integrity.

In their search for support against the USSR, Turkey was impelled to look beyond the weakened nations of western Europe, in the post-war period, particularly after the UK's contraction of its commitments in the eastern Mediterranean. While the Turks reaffirm their adherence to the Tripartite treaty of mutual assistance, it is apparent that they consider that its value is less as a direct guarantee of British and French assistance than as an indirect and tenuous obligation on the US. Turkey's participation in the UN is dominated by the same objectives. Turkish representatives are active in the delegations of the UN and its associated organizations, and the Turks generally support the UN as an emerging system for the preservation of the security of all nations. Turkey is more willing than most members to make the UN an effective force but have no illusions as to its present strength.

Turkey looks to the US for present and future support. In 1947 the US, under the Truman doctrine, began to supply military equipment and technical advice, with the objective of bolstering Turkish determination to resist Soviet pressure and of increasing Turkey's capability to resist possible outright Soviet or Satellite aggression. Later US economic aid, including ECA and Eximbank funds, was extended to assist the Turks in carrying the financial burden of its defense forces, and to build a strong economic base, both for its defense effort and for the development of economic and political stability.

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Although US pronouncements of its interest in the preservation of Turkey's security and extension of military and economic assistance have given the Turks a large measure of assurance, they are still deeply concerned by the lack of a formal guarantee that the US will render prompt and effective aid in the event of Russian aggression. Having been thus far unable to obtain a direct US commitment -- consistently the primary Turkish objective -- the Turks have sought less direct US guarantees through membership in NATO or through the formation of an eastern Mediterranean security organization backed by the US. To the Turks, associate membership in NATO represents only a slight improvement in their situation. Formation of a Mediterranean bloc without US support would offer no advantages and has been firmly opposed by Turkey.

B. Reasons for Turkey's pro-western alignment. Turkey's foreign policy is essentially a function of the desire of a small, highly unified nation to preserve its independence in the face of implicit threats by a powerful neighbor determined to secure control over peripheral areas. The Turks are acutely conscious that their geographical position in the southern flank of the Soviet Union and astride the waterway connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean place their country in an area of primary concern to the USSR. More realistic than most other nations, the Turks seek to ally themselves with the power or combination of powers with the capability of opposing superior force to the USSR. The political, social, and ideological affinities that exist between Turkey and the western powers strengthen Turkey's alignment, but they are of lesser importance.

Modern Turkish nationalism was largely the reaction to the attempts by foreign powers to dominate and then to dismember

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the Ottoman Empire. The nation that emerged in Anatolia under Ataturk's leadership was highly nationalistic and having in the following years divested itself of disparate elements, is 95 percent ethnically Turkish. Unified in their determination to preserve the nation, the Turks oppose the USSR not necessarily because of the political and economic philosophy which it professes, but because the Soviet Union is the heir of previous Russian regimes that had coveted Turkish territory. Well in advance of other peoples, the Turks perceived that Communism was essentially a new form of Russian imperialism. Few Turkish individuals, therefore, are attracted to Communism as a politico-economic doctrine, and those who have indicated a sympathy for Communism are soon imprisoned. Maintenance of internal security by the effective Turkish police is a relatively easy task.

The political institutions of Turkey, modeled by Ataturk on those of the west, were accepted by a great majority of the people and have rapidly become rooted in the Turkish soil. The extension of democracy is building a stronger base for Turkish national power, and is developing ideological ties with the western democracies. It is not improbable that a dictatorial Turkey would be as firmly aligned with the west, but it would not possess as effective national power.

The extension of US military and economic assistance to Turkey reinforced Turkish determination to resist Soviet pressure but did not create or substantially modify that determination. Perhaps the most significant effect of US aid was to bolster the Turkish economy, which was sagging under the weight of defense expenditures and decline of the export trade.

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III. POSSIBILITIES OF A SHIFT IN TURKEY'S PRO-US ALIGNMENT

Virtually the only circumstance that would lead Turkey to abandon its present alignment with the US would be a decision by the US to abandon its global commitments and to retire behind the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It may be presumed that the USSR would seize the opportunity thus presented by insisting first on minor and then more important concession from Turkey. The present Turkish government would probably yield on some points and then resign in favor of neutrality-minded elements - possibly members of the ultra-conservative Party of the Nation in combination with individual leftists in the hope that the new government would be able to reach an accommodation with the USSR.

A reduction in the US power position as the result of local Soviet/Satellite victories in the Balkans or the Middle East or of further reverses in the cold war would not significantly alter Turkey's alignment if, in suffering such losses, the US demonstrated its fundamental aim of continuing the struggle against the Soviet Union. The Turks are conditioned to expect further reverses of the free world, but have faith that ultimately the US will lead the free world to victory.

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V. PROBABLE TURKISH COURSES OF ACTION IN THE EVENT OF WAR AND THE IMPLICATIONS THEREOF

- A. Turkish reaction to Soviet or Satellite assault on Turkey
(Defense -- G-2)
- B. Turkish reaction to isolated Soviet or Satellite action against a nearby country (Defense -- G-2)
- C. Turkish reaction to an extension of hostilities in the Far East. In

the event that the Korean conflict were expanded to involve direct hostilities with Communist China, the Turkish reaction would be ambivalent. On the one hand, Turkey would still be impelled to support action against the Chinese Communists by its conviction that all nations threatened by Soviet imperialism must stand together and by its desire to demonstrate fully to the US its reliability as an ally. On the other hand, the Turks would become much more concerned with their own situation vis-a-vis the USSR and would view unfavorably any greater commitment of US military strength in the Far East, unless such commitment were matched or even exceeded by expansion of US strength in the eastern Mediterranean and US guarantees to Turkey. The line of action actually adopted by Turkey would be determined largely by the Turkish Government's estimate of its security position at the moment, and the decision would not be made until after extended consideration.

If the UN forces were driven out of Korea and instituted a campaign of aerial bombardment and naval blockade against Communist China, Turkey would undoubtedly give diplomatic support to such action in the UN and elsewhere and would probably continue to provide the services of the Turkish Brigade and possibly a naval unit or two.

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US involvement in a war with Communist China would create alarm in Turkey, not because the weakness of common resolve in the free world would become clear, but because such a development would lead the Turks to question US capability to assist Turkey if the latter were attacked. In these circumstances, Turkey's decision would be long delayed and it would be careful to avoid any new provocation of the USSR and its Satellites.

D. Turkey's role in a general war in which Turkey itself was not initially attacked. The cardinal objective in Turkish strategic thinking is defense of the country's frontiers. The government's decision to send troops to Korea was reached only after long deliberation and was justified against opposition criticism, by reference to obligations of the UN Charter. More importantly, it was made under circumstances in which a lesser Soviet satellite was the aggressor and the forces aligned against North Korea appeared formidable.

In the event of a general war in which Turkey was not attacked by the USSR, the Turks would not move immediately. Turkish action would be governed largely by the Turks' estimate of the Western powers' capabilities and intentions in the eastern Mediterranean. Turkey is not obligated by treaty to assist neighboring states to resist aggression and is unlikely to join in any regional security pact unless such a pact commits the US to come to the aid of any member attacked. If an obligation to resist aggression is laid on Turkey by UN action, Turkey will still hesitate to act outside its frontiers until there is some assurance of the development of Western armed strength in the area.

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